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DE RUEHKU #1746/01 3521310
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0457
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 0486
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 1004
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0325
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 3148

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 001746

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2017

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SUBJECT: LORD PADDY ASHDOWN MEETS HAMID KARZAI IN KUWAIT TO
DISCUSS POSSIBLE ROLE AS UN ENVOY

Classified By: CDA Misenheimer for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

1. (C) On December 12, CDA met with British Lord Jeremy (AKA Paddy) Ashdown for a readout on an earlier meeting that day between Ashdown and Afghanistan President Karzai to discuss the possibility of Ashdown becoming the UN Envoy to Afghanistan. Ashdown assessed that the terms of reference he received from U/S Burns are acceptable, but he would need a direct line of communication with the Secretary and regular access to USG intelligence products. He added that dealing with Pakistan would be a major challenge and Musharraf must be pressured to change his current policy. Ashdown will spend the next 2-3 months assembling a plan of action, followed by visits with Karzai to key capitals. He and Karzai agreed to engage politically with Taliban elements willing to exchange bullets for ballots. He stressed that he does not want to be put under UNDPKO authority. End Summary.

First Formal Meeting between Ashdown and Karzai

2. (C) On December 12, CDA met with British Lord Jeremy (AKA Paddy) Ashdown and UK Ambassador to Kuwait Stuart Laing for a readout on an earlier meeting at Kuwait's Bayan Palace between Ashdown and Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai and members of the Afghanistan Cabinet (on a state visit to Kuwait). Ashdown said that his breakfast meeting with Karzai, also held on December 12, was not publicly advertised and was attended by Afghanistan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta, Finance Minister Anwar Ul-Haq Ahady, Commerce and Industry Minister Mohammad Amin Farhang, National Security Advisor Dr. Zalmay Rassoul and Economic Advisor to the President Ishaq Naderi. Ashdown stated that the purpose of the meeting was for he and Karzai to get to know each other as Ashdown considers the possibility of becoming the UN Envoy to Afghanistan.

3. (C) This meeting was the first formal encounter between the two, and began with discussions on poetry, philosophy and India, where they discovered a great deal in common in terms of childhood and educational experiences. Ashdown noted that he was undecided on whether Karzai presents himself more as a tribal chieftain or state leader.

Terms of Reference

¶4. (C) Ashdown said that he was still studying the Envoy position's terms of reference as outlined by U/S Burns, but indicated that his initial impression is that these terms effectively enable the Envoy "to do the job." He added that Karzai has requested a copy of these points to determine the authority and role that the UN Envoy would employ. In the terms, Ashdown understood he would have a direct line of access to the Secretary of State. Ashdown requested, if he accepts the position, that he have excellent cooperation and regular updates from U.S. intelligence services, as he did as High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ashdown stressed that he does not want to have to report to the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO).

Pakistan: "Bee Buzzing in Karzai's Bonnet"

¶5. (C) According to Ashdown, he and Karzai spoke at length about Pakistan and how Pakistan's interference in internal Afghani dynamics, though temporarily diminished at present, is one of the main sources of problems in Afghanistan. He said that Karzai intends to visit President Musharraf after the December 19-22 Eid holidays to discuss the future bilateral relationship. Ashdown intimated that Musharraf is bent on expanding Pakistani influence in Afghanistan, stating that Pakistan aims to take over the former USSR's role in leadership of Afghanistan. He added that Musharraf's Pakistan has become a "bee buzzing in Karzai's bonnet." Ashdown said that if he takes on the role as UN Envoy, one of his primary goals is to reduce Pakistani interference in Afghan affairs.

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Paddy's Plan of Action

¶6. (C) Ashdown said that if he takes on the role of UN Envoy, he would spend 2-3 months assembling a plan of action. If Karzai agreed with this plan, the pair would travel to various capitals (he indicated London, Paris, Washington, and possibly Beijing and Moscow) to seek buy-in from key players. He added that he and Karzai agree that some Taliban members should be allowed to engage in the political process, provided that they vote with ballots vice bullets. The key, he suggested, is in separating the homegrown, or misguided, Taliban from the more dangerous elements recruited from outside of Afghanistan.

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MISENHEIMER